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SNC-LAVALIN'S FORTUNES ARE IMPROVING AFTER STRIKING A PLEA DEAL. ***FINANCIAL POST***

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Donald Trump becomes only the third president in U.S. history to be impeached. The vote along partisan lines revealed a House — and a nation — divided

IMPEACHED

COMMENT

A sad spectacle that elevates no one

KELLY MCPARLAND

On Wednesday the sun came up, night followed day, and the U.S. House of Representatives voted to impeach President Donald Trump.

None of these three things was ever in doubt. From the moment an investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller failed to produce the damning evidence Democrats needed to drive Trump from office, it was clear they would seek another way to negate the results of the 2016 election. Mueller was looking into Russian efforts to influence that campaign. The impeachment drive sought to prove Trump abused his power in trying to get Ukraine's president to launch a corruption investigation that could have embarrassed Democrat presidential rival Joe Biden, then obstructed justice by refusing to co-operate in congressional hearings.

Just as certain as the outcome is the expected result in the Senate, which is dominated by Trump allies who will refuse to convict him.

To all but the most partisan observers, a few other things are pretty plain. Yes, Trump spoke to the president of Ukraine and asked him for a favour, which had a good chance of providing mud he could use to damage Biden and improve his own chances in the 2020 election. Yes, officials in Ukraine could be forgiven for guessing that the sudden uncertainty surrounding $400 million in U.S. military aid they'd been expecting was linked to Trump's request. And yes, Trump did all he could to make it difficult for Democrats to rush ahead with their attempt to oust him.

The difference is in interpretation. Of course Trump did all those things, and hoped to get some dope on Biden. He's Donald Trump, that's how he operates. The man has no concept of limits on what's appropriate for a president, and what isn't. Democrats insist it's a crime and justifies turfing him before voters get a chance. Republicans say all presidents engage in dirty tricks — it's politics after all — and Trump is no different. Nothing to see here folks, move along.

Democrats have known from the beginning that their drive had little to no chance of success, given the certainty of Senate Republicans defending their champion. If they hoped to somehow shift public sentiment against Trump, they appear to have failed. Other than those who were already committed to one side or the other, the American public has shown a yawning indifference to the entire spectacle. Trump is just as popular with his fans, and just as unpopular with others, as he ever was. Democrat hopefuls criss-crossing Iowa in advance of the caucuses that will kick-start the final run to the nomination have found voters keen to discuss any number of issues, but impeachment isn't anywhere near the top of their list.

See McPARLAND on A10

Trump charged with abuse of power, obstruction

ADRIAN HUMPHREYS

Leaving the White House at 4:46 p.m., Wednesday, U.S. President Donald Trump walked to Marine One helicopter to begin his trip to a campaign rally in Battle Creek, Michigan. While en route, noting on Twitter that supporters were lining up to greet him, he wrote: "Thank you Michigan, I am on my way. See everybody soon."

His reception at the "Keep America Great" rally should be more soothing for him.

The Washington, D.C., he left behind still rang with vitriol and high-octane rhetoric inside the House of Representatives, uncharacteristically jammed packed, as Congress debated a motion to impeach him.

Inside the House, Wednesday's proceedings were variously said to be "historic," "sad," "solemn," "grave," and a "sham."

In a dark suit to reflect what she has called a "sombre" time, Democrat and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wore a brooch that was a replica of the Mace of the Republic, the symbol for the power of the House.

The impeachment vote was either a display of "moral courage" to save the democracy on which America was built, as Pelosi said, or, in the words of Republican Congressman Mike Kelly, "another date that will live in infamy," comparing it to the Second World War attack on Pearl Harbor.

The move to impeach Trump was "nothing more than a political hit job," as characterized by Republican Congressman Guy Reschenthaler; unless Trump's actions with Ukraine's president were "a geopolitical shakedown," as characterized by Democratic Congresswoman Nydia Velasquez.

The evidence against Trump was either "clear cut and undisputed" or a "hyper-partisan... sham since day one."

The House approved its impeachment debate rules just before noon, starting the clock on more than six hours of debate, equally divided.

The speeches, some eloquent and some disjointed, evoked imagery of Hitler and Jesus, both in relation to Trump, from opposite sides of the House.

And there was much talk of hate. Republican after Republican took to the podium to say the Democrats were only lashing out desperately because they "hate" Trump and what he has done for the United States, including renegotiating the "rip-off trade deal with Mexico and Canada," said one Republican representative.

Kelly accused his Democratic colleagues of being "so blinded by your hate that you can't see straight."

Democrats retorted that it wasn't hate for Trump that compelled them, but love for their country.

And the debate rolled on.

The bellicose and jarring rhetoric underscored the division in the House and reflected that within the country. As enthusiastic supporters of the president gathered in large numbers at the Michigan arena, protests demanding his impeachment were held elsewhere.

See VOTE on A9

A brief history of impeachment, A9-A11
Democrats' next move, A11

TOP: HOUSE TV VIA REUTERS; KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

"Although the case for a wider and deeper Indo-Canadian partnership is obvious, making it happen will still require work on both sides.

INDIA'S MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, WHO ARRIVES FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT THURSDAY. A12

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